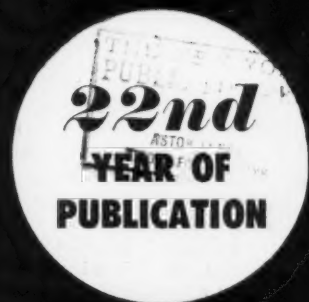


The American **Record Guide**

VOLUME 13, NO. 4 35 CENTS PER COPY DECEMBER, 1955



IN THIS ISSUE:

• *Recommending*
Twenty-Five of the
Year's Most
Outstanding
Recordings
for your
Christmas Shopping



Jan Sibelius
who celebrates his 90th birthday December 8

25 LPs of 1955

Editorial Comments

IT IS our custom this time of the year to wish all of our readers a musical and otherwise happy Christmas and, as the budget will permit, an even more bounteous New Year. It is also our custom at this time to skim the cream from the top of the bottle, as it were, and to collate and present to you a list of our critics' choice of the best recordings of the year. We would not think of postponing our year's end wishes but the Niagara of releases, and the consequently unrelenting pressure on all of us, has made it necessary to put off to next month our selections of the best of the year. This will, however, be to the advantage of readers, because we have decided to augment the tabulations with abbreviated résumés of the original reviews. We think that this will perform a real service to the steadily increasing *Record Guide* family, particularly those who have joined us during the past twelve months.

As a preamble to the "Year's Best," for your Christmas shopping convenience, we wish to recommend our selection of twenty-five of the year's most outstanding recordings.

BEETHOVEN: *Five Piano Concertos; Eroica Variations.* Artur Schnabel. Victor set LCT-6700. (Reissue from 78 rpm) (June)

BEETHOVEN: *Violin Concerto.* Milstein, Pittsburgh Sym. Orch. (Steinberg). Capitol P-8313. (Nov.)

BEETHOVEN: *An die ferne Geliebte; SCHUBERT: Schwanengesang.* Nos. 8-13. Fischer-Dieskau and Moore. (Jan.)

BERLIOZ: *Symphonie fantastique.* Munch & Boston Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1900. (Oct.)

BRAHMS: *Piano Concerto No. 1.* Rubinstein, Chicago Sym. Orch. (Reiner). Victor LM-1831. (Jan.)

BRAHMS: *Violin Concerto.* Johanna Martzy, Philharmonia Orch. (Kletzki). Angel 35137. (Jan.)

CORELLI: *Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, No. 4; VIVALDI: Concerto in F for Oboe & Strings; CLEMENTI: Symphony in D.* Virtuoso di Roma. Victor LHMV-2. (Jan.)

DEBUSSY: *La Mer & Iberia.* Toscanini, NBC Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1833. (March)

FALLA: *Nights in the Gardens of Spain.* Soriano, Madrid Cham. Orch. (Argenta). London International TW 91019. (May)

MOZART: *Così fan tutte.* Schwarzkopf, Merri-man, Simoneau, Panerai, Bruscantini, etc., Philharmonia Orch. & Chorus (Karajan). Angel set 3522. (Oct.)

MOZART: *Don Giovanni.* Danco, della Casa, Guedin, Siepi, Corena, etc., Vienna Phil. Chorus and Orch. (Kripi). London set XLLA-34. (Nov.)

MOZART: *Symphony in C, K. 425 (Linz).* Walter, Columbia Sym. Orch. Columbia SL-224. (Nov.)

RAVEL: *Daphnis et Chloé.* Munch, Boston Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1893. (Oct.)

SATIE: *Piano Works.* Wm. Masselos. MGM-E3154. (April)

SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 4; WAGNER: Siegfried Idyll.* Cantelli, Philharmonia Orch. Victor LHMV-13. (July)

STRAUSS: *Till Eulenspiegel; Don Juan; WEBER: Overtures to Freischütz & Euryanthe.* Furtwaengler, Vienna Phil. Orch. Victor LHMV-19. (July)

STRAUSS: *Till Eulenspiegel; Death and Transfiguration.* Toscanini, NBC Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1891. (Nov.)

STRAVINSKY: *Petrouchka.* Scherchen, Phil. Sym. Orch. of London. Westminster W-LAB 7011. (Dec.)

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Sleeping Beauty Ballet.* Dorati, Minneapolis Sym. Orch. Mercury OL-3-103. (Nov.)

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Swan Lake Ballet.* Dorati, Minneapolis Sym. Orch. Mercury OL-3-102. (May)

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 5.* Rodzinski, Phil. Sym. Orch. of London. Westminster W-LAB-8001. (Sept.)

VERDI: *Aida.* Milanov, Bjoerling, Warren, etc., Rome Opera House Chorus and Orch. (Perlea). (Nov.)

VERDI: *Te Deum.* Toscanini, Shaw Chorale, Moscona. Victor LM-1849. (May)

VIVALDI: *Four Concertos.* Virtuosi di Roma, Decca DL-9697. (Jan.)

VIVALDI: *Five Chamber Works.* Rampal (flute), Pierlot (oboe), Gendre (violin), Honge (bassoon), Veyron-Lacroix (harpichord). Haydn Society 116. (April)

* * *

MANY READERS have congratulated us on our new and larger format, while others tell us that they liked the more distinctive, smaller size. Be that as it may, we humans are the victims on all sides to predetermined trends, and the Moguls of the publishing industry seem to have decreed the larger size to be standard. Advertisers today prefer a larger showcase in which to display their productions. In the words of the Prophet, in our estimation, the change amounts to the difference (if there is a difference) between six or half-dozen. What bothers

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us is, we feel sure, that which bothers countless long-time members of the *Record Guide* family—namely, that Vol. 22, when bound, will no longer fit where its twenty-one predecessors repose; a small enough price to pay for progress.

As a consolation for those to whom this might not have occurred, we might point out an attractive feature of our new format is that it will fit neatly into the standard 9 by 12 ringbinder that can be had in any stationery store. It is necessary to punch holes, one half inch in, at the appropriate points.

While on the subject of the new format, we would like to point out the significance of the theme of artist J. J. Spector's cover design—which we at home base rather like. The motif symbolizes a reality that has come to pass in later stages of the LP era—that the nascence of the record proceeds from the tape. The next step in the evolution of the recording art may, or may not, be the supplanting of the disc by the tape. We do not anticipate this eventuality as others do, but we are prepared to make the transition if it comes to that. Your editor has some thoughts on this highly conjectural matter which he will pursue later on.

A MEMENTO OF JOSEF HOFMANN

CHOPIN: *Waltz in D flat, Op. 64, No. 1; Ballade in G minor, Op. 23; Berceuse in D flat, Op. 57; Andante Spianato e Grande Polonaise, Op. 22; Etude in G flat, Op. 25, No. 9; Nocturne in E flat, Op. 9, No. 2; RACHMANINOFF: Prelude in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5; MENDELSSOHN: Spinning Song, Op. 67, No. 4; BEETHOVEN: Turkish March; MOSZKOWSKI: Spanish Caprice, Op. 37; Josef Hofmann (piano). Columbia 5ML-4929, \$5.95.*

▲THIS presentation comprises a goodly portion of Josef Hofmann's Golden Jubilee Concert given at the Metropolitan Opera House on November 28, 1937. Rescued from acetates which were probably in rather bad condition, the sound is shockingly poor in the *fortes* and just a bit better elsewhere. Still this disc provides LP era record buyers with perhaps their only opportunity to hear one of the grandest pianists of our century. And for any pianist, it is required listening; for perfection in Hofmann's style of playing is now virtually unavailable elsewhere.

Josef Hofmann had transcendental technical equipment, a complete knowledge of his instrument's capabilities, a fine-spun singing tone, and a passion for refreshing the standard repertory items (most particularly the 19th century romantic literature). By refreshing I mean the discovering and transmittal

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of usually hidden inner voices, of new balances and tonal blends of opposing sounds. Some of this refreshing was thoroughly convincing, some seemed arbitrary and while not contrary at least different from the composer's indications. Critics and pianists, on the whole, adored Hofmann. A small minority often believed he had gone too far. The listener can hear this disc, however, and decide for himself how he feels about the handling of ten selections.

Your reviewer found the delicate tracing of line, the airy phrasing, and overall brilliance of the *Minute Waltz* delightful. The ballade, while it contains many fascinating ideas, would have seemed more convincing had it been played with less tempo rubato. The lovely sound of the berceuse almost makes up for the somewhat matter-of-fact manner of expressing the sentiment, but not quite. Most exciting of all is the *Andante Spianato e Grande Polonaise*. You must hear this playing to believe it. Proud, aristocratic, tender in expression, dazzling in execution, Hofmann makes one believe for the moment that this is the real Chopin, though I doubt the composer ever had in mind the kind of rhythmic and tempo rubato Hofmann often employs. All the same, one must admit that this composition responds to the Hofmann treatment and produces that rare effect of complete, triumphant exhilaration. The playing of the remaining *morceaux* is for the most part superb and worthy of close study. (I must call particular attention to the finely graded dynamics in the *Turkish March* and the Rachmaninoff prelude.) The Moszkowski work is piano playing for its own sake. Long a Hofmann specialty, it makes as convincing an argument—performed as it is—for such a *raison d'être* as you are ever likely to encounter. —C.J.L.

The Instrumental SOLOIST

THE TRUMPET, Volume 2: *Dix Etudes*; L. Menardi (trumpet) (Sabarich) London LL-1103, \$5.95.

THE SAXOPHONE, Volumes 1, 3 and 4: *Sonate* (Lazarus) *Divertissement* (Dubois); *Quatuor de Saxophones* (Abail); *Grave et Presto* (Rivier), etc.; M. Mule (saxophone), M. Lenom (piano) & *Quatuor de Saxophones* Marcel Mule. London LS 986, 1187, 1188, \$3.98 each.

THE FLUTE, Volume 1: *Fantaisie sur "Carnaval de Venise"* (Genin); F. Marseau (flute); **THE CLARINET, Volume 2:** *Mouvement Perpetuel* (Ries);

Printemps (Duranil), etc.; Le Secteur de Clarinettes de Paris. London LS 1096, \$3.98.

▲THERE is little here to detain the casual listener; these records are for students and *aficionados* of wind instruments.

The United States boasts very few (if any) full-time symphony (or "serious") saxophonists. When that instrument is called for (Bizet: *L'Arlesienne*, Mussorgsky-Ravel: *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Strauss: *Sinfonia Domestica*, etc.), an extra clarinetist usually gets the assignment (fingering of sax and clarinet is very similar). The French have led the way in the use of this instrument, both as regards writing and playing. While the scores represented here have little to offer beyond their practical use as vehicles for the instrument, they are peculiarly suited to the task at hand.

Mule's contributions are models of impeccable execution, particularly notable for a smooth, clean tone of great refinement. These records can have great value for the serious student. An analysis of the subtle shadings of Mule's tone production could be most rewarding.

The flute selection is a brilliant technical study, expertly played. Again, useful to students as a model of style, but of no general interest. There is a little more meat on the clarinet side, where we can hear some sturdy bass clarinet and double-bass clarinet work supporting the ensemble. The double-bass clarinet is quite a rarity in this country, though widely used in European wind bands.

The trumpet disc is strictly for trumpet players, and may even prove somewhat indigestible to the less hardy of that breed. These ten *Etudes* are in the approved classical style of French wind playing, fiendishly difficult and at the same time stiffly formal and properly elegant. The shelves of French conservatories bulge with books and books of this sort of music for every standard wind instrument, written by revered masters whose main interest was always to construct as hazardous a course for the unwary player (usually an advanced student) as was humanly possible, always maintaining, of course, a formal, completely correct framework and syntax.

Menardi accomplishes this course with an excellent score; it is doubtful, however, whether his efforts are of much practical value on this side of the ocean. The French style of trumpet playing is not favored in American orchestras (Boston would be the main exception), so that the main reaction to this record can only be an appreciation of the soloist's agility and discipline.

Recording in each case is exceptionally good, with a clean, lifelike quality reproducing the veritable timbres of the instruments. —A.W.P.

OPERA SPOTLIGHT

MUSSORGSKY: *Khovanshchina* (Opera in 5 Acts); Zharko Tzveych (Ivan Khovansky), Alexander Marinkovich (Andrew Khovansky), Drago Startz (Golitsin), Dushan Popovich (Shaklovity), Miro Changelovich (Dositheus), Melanie Bugarinovich (Martha), Stepan Andrashevich (Scrivener), Sofiya Jankovich (Emma), Zhivoin Milosavlevich (Varsonoviev), Krsta Kristich (Kuzka), others, Chorus and Orchestra of the National Opera, Belgrade, conducted by Kreshimir Baranovich. London XLLA-29, 4 discs, \$15.92.

▲MUSSORGSKY did not complete his last opera, *Khovanshchina*, to facilitate its production. Rimsky-Korsakov did, and later Stravinsky and Ravel restored suppressed passages. Musically, it has many pages as imposing and as beautiful as *Boris*, but as a story it is diffuse. The story deals with the social and religious struggles in Russia in the 1680's. It is an account "of the Khovansky rebellion and the revision of the Bible undertaken in 1655 by the Patriarch Nikon which resulted in a schism between those who accepted the projected reform and the believers who strongly opposed it." Mussorgsky, with his revolutionary nature, was intrigued by the story and achieved some of his best work in his music. So many characters, reflecting opposing viewpoints, leaves this opera without the dominating characterization of *Boris*. One becomes confused in a first hearing with the panorama of life unfolded since our sympathies have to shift back and forth.

It is a pity that Mussorgsky did not have the time and strength to revise this opera before his death, yet as Alec Robertson has said in *The Gramophone*, "as it stands it remains a work of great austere beauty." The only performance of this opera I ever heard, in New York (over 20 years ago), impressed me greatly though it fatigued me. Alec Robertson tells of hearing Chaliapin in the role of Dositheus, head of the Old Believers, who in the final act commit mass suicide on a flaming funeral pyre. (The last act was mostly Rimsky-Korsakov's work.) Chaliapin would assuredly have made his part stand out in the opera and remain a vivid memory, as Robertson confirms. Unfortunately, Changelovich is no Chaliapin; he does not have the vocal security or musical imagination of the latter, but he impresses me more than did the forgotten basso of my one live performance especially in the final act. Apparently, the men of the Belgrade Opera are well trained singing actors with considerable understanding of musical characterization. Popovich, who sang Igor in the Borodin opera, gives a more decisive

account of Shaklovity, and Tzveych, who sang Prince Galitsky, is impressive as Khovansky. Melanie Bugarinovich, as Martha, is not as impressive as she was in the role of Konchakovna in *Prince Igor*, perhaps because her musical tessitura here is more difficult, but she remains nevertheless an affecting artist—notably in her aria in the third act. Sofiya Jankovich, as Emma, has a shrill voice, but this is in character, as is the dry tone used by Stepan Andrashevich, as the Scrivener. The Belgrade Opera is fortunate in having a group of artists who are capable of believable characterization. The choral singing is superb, vital and impressive. The conductor has the vitality, imagination and rhythmic life to stimulate fine ensemble and individual performance.

The recording is in every way as fine as that of *Prince Igor*—often sumptuous in sound and always realistic. The various effects, necessary to scenic atmosphere, are perfectly contrived. London engineers invading Belgrade assuredly have given Russian engineers something for which to strive. —P.H.R.

PUCCINI: *Madama Butterfly* (Opera in 3 Acts); Maria Meneghini Callas (Butterfly), Lucia Danieli (Suzuki), Nicolai Gedda (Pinkerton), Luisa Villa (Kate Pinkerton), Mario Borriello (Sharpless), Renato Ercolani (Goro), Mario Carlin (Yamadori), Plinio Clabassi (The Bonze), Enrico Campi (Commissioner), Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala, Milan, conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Angel set 3523, 3 discs with libretto, \$16.94, or \$11.44.

▲**MARIA CALLAS** has just completed her appearances with the Chicago Lyric Theatre, where she left a lasting impression as an incontestable first lady of the opera house. To hear this singer in person is to realize better her remarkable gifts as singer and actress, for in the theater her vocal inequalities are not so obtrusive as on records. In almost any role she essays in life she is the dominating personality. While Callas is one of the finest Toscas of today, her *Butterfly* is at this point of her career less successful, judging from this recording. Her conception has the requisite dramatic intensity and anguish, but it seems hampered at times by a reserve, as though she were holding back. This reserve is shared by the conductor. Karajan is a more thoroughgoing musician than Gavazzeni or Erede, but he lacks the essential passion for this Italianate music. Callas brings to her performance some of her most expressive *mezzo-voce* and an obviously carefully studied absorption with the text. There are moments when she breathes new life into some phrases that others pass over lightly, as in the Love Duet and in the Letter Scene with Sharpless in the second act. Here, her attributes as a singing tragedienne are most impressive, as later

in the aria to the child, *Sai cos'ebbe cuore*. Her Entrance is quite lovely though her high tone at the end of this scene is needlessly shrill after her previously expressive singing. Her *Un bel di* is disappointing after Tebaldi's; it is too suppressed with little conjuring of needed excitement. One of her outstanding moments is in Act 2 after the cannon shot—the work of a great singing actress building to a thrilling utterance of the ship's name. The Flower Duet is well sung, but she does not quite substantiate *Butterfly's* gaiety. Her Death Scene is superb. Nicolai Gedda is, in my estimation, miscast as Pinkerton. He does not make a living personage of the character, though he sings with knowing artistry. He might be just another "gob", as one friend of mine has said. Mario Borriello is also miscast as Sharpless. Strangely, the best Sharpless in all the complete sets is Taddei in the Cetra release, which brings up another point. There are some who highly favor Clara Petrella's *Butterfly* which is decidedly the best characterization that she has done in a recording. She acts with her voice as convincingly as any other soprano, but I prefer Tebaldi's *Butterfly* for her finer vocal work. Tagliavini's Pinkerton is admirable, much in the Gigli tradition.

The lesser roles in this new set are well enough sung but hardly impressively. The Suzuki is quite disappointing. The La Scala chorus and Orchestra are praiseworthy, though they must have felt at odds on occasion with the conductor's temperament. The recording is characteristic of the realistic engineering to be found in all Callas' operatic releases. Though the singers are well forward, atmospheric effects are nevertheless skillfully handled, far better in the humming chorus at the beginning of the last act than in the recent Victor set. —P.H.R.

STRAUSS: *Ariadne auf Naxos*; Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (Ariadne); Irmgard Seefried (Composer); Rita Streich (Zerbinetta); Alfred Neubauer (Major Domo); Karl Dönch (Music Master); Rudolf Schock (Bacchus); Gerhard Unger (Officer; Scaramuccio); Hugues Cuenod (Dancing Master); Erich Strauss (Wig Maker); Otakar Kraus (Lackey); Hermann Prey (Arlecchino); Fritz Ollendorff (Truffaldino); Helmut Krebs (Brighella); Lisa Otto (Naiad); Grace Hoffman (Dryad); Anny Felbermayer (Echo); Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Herbert von Karajan. Angel 3532, 3 discs, \$15.94 or \$10.44.

▲**HERE** for the epicures is *Ariadne*, and one of those carefully picked casts we have come to expect in Angel operatic recordings. It should do much toward establishing the work, which has never become a repertory piece, despite the success of such productions as that at New York's City Center several years back. To the grow-

ing legion of Straussians the opera contains some of the master's loveliest music; indeed, for all the breadth of Hofmannsthal's humor, it is the sheer beauty of the music that stays with one after a performance. The performance in this immaculate recording has many virtues. Schwarzkopf has a particularly congenial role in Ariadne; she sings her various monologues with exquisite tonal beauty. I wonder if her airs as *prima donna* in the prelude are not laid on rather heavily, but she does make her point. Streich as Zerbinetta is extremely proficient, admirably musical, all the score calls for, though she may not have quite the sparkle of an Ivogün. Seefried as the Composer could hardly be better, and a word or two are due Cuenod as the Dancing Master and the ladies' trio that watches over Ariadne. Schock, who takes the final scene with Schwarzkopf, is and remains a German tenor, not the most constricted of them, but not quite what one wishes to hear. There is some variation in the recording balance: the three ladies seem rather distant on the third side, as though they were inside Ariadne's cave. But all such criticisms are decidedly minor. —P.L.M.

VERDI: *Don Carlo* (Opera in 4 Acts); Boris Christoff (Philip II of Spain), Mario Filippeschi (Don Carlo), Tito Gobbi (Rodrigo), Giulio Neri (Grand Inquisitor), Plinio Clabassi (A Friar), Antonietta Stella (Elisabeth), Elena Nicolai (Eboli), Loretta di Lelio (Theobald), Paolo Caroli (Count of Lerma and Royal Herald), Orietta Musucci (Celestial Voice), Orchestra and Chorus of the Rome Opera House conducted by Gabriele Santini. RCA Victor set LM-6124, 3 discs, \$11.94.

▲**THE** second recording of Verdi's *Don Carlo* introduces a new and singularly gifted Italian soprano, Antonietta Stella, who is the possessor of an ingratiating voice. Her portrayal of Elisabeth is not as dramatically intense as Caniglia's, but is sung with more security of pitch and with a beauty of tone that Caniglia never could conjure. Stella's caressing pianissimo singing is quite as lovely as Tebaldi's. Though she lacks stylistic elegance, true grandeur and perfect control when using full voice, her vocal accomplishments are nevertheless considerable, and one hopes that she will be heard in other operatic roles on records. Eleana Nicolai is a dramatic Eboli, rich toned, vital in the ensemble scenes and in her big aria *O don fatale* but, like most mezzo-soprano's less successful in the lyric *Canzone del Volo*. Filippeschi, who will be recalled in Cetra's *Aida* and *William Tell*, gives a better account of himself as Don Carlo, employing his *lyrico-spinto* voice more effectively if not always expressively. His singing is less uneven than Picchi's in the Cetra set. One could

(Continued on page 65)

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Notes and Reviews

THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

ORCHESTRA

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 2 in B flat, Op. 19; Concerto No. 4 in G, Op. 58;* Rudolf Serkin (piano) with Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia LP disc ML-5037, \$4.98.

▲COLUMBIA has given the listener on this disc a great deal of music for his money, but it has made sacrifices in so doing. There is a good deal of pre-echo in the G major, no separating bands and sound that does not have the imposing dynamic stretch of the more easily accommodated B flat concerto. As for the performances: I do not wish to question Serkin's serious intentions or knowledge of this repertory, but it would seem that he ought to be able to keep his passions and technique under a bit more control. Serkin is a fine pianist, as we all know; but there are moments in both concertos where he turns bumpy-fingered and where he substitutes a hectic and violent means of expression for the more appropriate quiet, cumulative flow of real intensity. He is generally more successful with the by-no-means-easy earlier concerto; but though there is sparkle in his playing, I can find nary a trace of the wit that would make the final movement, for example, seem incandescent. Ormandy's accompaniments sound lovely, but expressively they are all too glib. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Overtures—Fidelio; Leonore Nos. 1-3;* Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Otto Klemperer. Angel 35258, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲WHILE they last, the advertisement says, a Westminster disc assembling precisely the same program as this, under Scherchen, can be had for \$2.99. I cannot in conscience maintain that Klemperer's way with these pieces is worth that much difference. All other things being equal, nevertheless, I would be inclined to recommend the Angel disc. It is not so exciting as to sound *per se*, but the Philharmonia plays rings around Scherchen's forces. Both conductors are decidedly conservative as to interpretation, which is proper but not what you

might expect from either on past performance. —J.L.

BLOCH: *Voice in the Wilderness—Symphonic Poem with Cello obbligato; Schelomo—Hebraic Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra;* Zara Nelsova with the London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Ernest Ansermet. London LL-1232, \$3.98.

▲BLOCH'S *Voice in the Wilderness*, with its mysticism and beauty, is his greatest orchestral work. A dozen years ago, I took a recording from the air of a performance by the late Emanuel Feuermann and the Philharmonic Symphony—a recording which has long served its best purposes. Feuermann was especially fond of this work which he lamented was not appreciated, as it should be, for its depths of emotion and its stirring drama. While *Schelomo* is an outward, rhapsodic opus, resplendent in its color-pageantry, the *Voice in the Wilderness* is a work of poetic introspection. The voice cries out to all humanity, "prophesying in desperation." There are six sections to this score which, as the annotator Ernest Chapman says, are "unified on the psychological level by the cohesion of mood, style, and underlying thought." Only the last section, the longest of the six, suggests a hopeful outlook on life from the Voice, or prophet, in the wilderness. Though Zara Nelsova does not have the virile expressiveness of Feuermann, she nevertheless plays her cello obbligato with poetic vehemence and conviction, and Ansermet reveals sympathetic rapport with and deep understanding for Bloch's great score. In a previous performance of *Schelomo* with the composer conducting (London 10" LS-138), Nelsova, for all her beauty of tone, lacked essential ardor and breadth in her cello solo which, in this performance with Ansermet's more telling orchestral direction, she now supplies. The recording of these two works is superb, more pleasurable to my ears in *Schelomo* than any other release, though the engineering in the Columbia and Westminster versions are assuredly richly realistic in sound. However, the disc mates are less well chosen. —P.H.R.

CHAVCHAVADZE: *L'Aigrette;* **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Bluebird Pas de Deux;* London International LP disc TWV-91048, \$4.98. **SERRA:** *Dona Ines de Castro;* **DEBUSSY:** *L'Ange Gris (Suite Bergamasque);* London International LP disc TWV-91049, \$4.98. Grand Orchestre du Marquis de Cuévas conducted by Gustave Cloez.

▲FROM a glance at the listings above, it is clear that the news of these discs is the unfamiliar music by Chavchavadze and Serra. It is news, all right, news that anyone would want to record these works. Chavchavadze, an international diletante, has produced a work that one would rather not even discuss. The score by Serra may support choreography, but on its own terms it offers very little other than a moderately skillful orchestration.

On some occasions one has heard ballet orchestras on records and thought: well, they never sounded like that in the theatre. These records are honest; give them credit for that. The Grand Orchestre of the Marquis de Cuévas' ballet company seems as undermanned, as dispirited, as imprecise as when I heard it last. —C.J.L.

CORELLI: *Concerti Grossi, Op. 6* (complete); English Baroque Orchestra conducted by Argeo Quadri. Westminster WN-3301, \$14.94.

▲NOW that Vox and Westminster are asking the same price, a choice between this set and the one Eckertsen made with the NBC Symphony strings need not be complicated by economics. Westminster's sound clearly is superior, but the Vox ensemble had a silkier tone that was not disguised in the reproduction. Quadri's approach is strictly according to the Italianate tradition, while Eckertsen's proceeded from his own extensive researches and hence has been somewhat vulnerable to scholarly cavil. Since the *Op. 6* always has left me slightly cold quite apart from its total import in history, I can report no strong feeling as to the more desirable of these competitive issues. The newer one, so handsomely engineered and so stunningly got up with pliofilm-lined sleeves and all, should have much more appeal to the many. J.L.

FALLA: *Concerto for Harpsichord;* **SURINACH:** *Tientos for Harpsichord, English Horn, and Tympani;* **RIETI:** *Partita for Flute, Oboe, String Quartet and Harpsichord Obbligato;* Sylvia Marlowe and the Concert Arts Players. Mercury P-8309, \$4.98.

▲FALLA'S *Harpsichord Concerto* remains one of his finest scores, combining characteristics of Scarlatti's keyboard work (Falla is said to have an intellectual affinity to the Italian composer) and its composer's Spanish inheritance, mainly liturgical, says one of his countrymen. At first

listening, the work may seem somewhat austere, but repetitions reveal its rights to be classified as a masterpiece in its genre. Years ago, Falla recorded this work, and fortunate is he who possesses that recording. Miss Marlowe might well have studied the composer's performance, so closely does she approximate it. Hers is the better of the two LP versions, both as a performance and a recording. This work is actually a sextet in which the harpsichord predominates. It is scored for harpsichord, flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, and cello. The Surinach opus is mood music in three contrasted sections, ingeniously scored, and the Rieti a clever neo-classical work whose healthy liveness grows on one. The well balanced recording, with its realistic nearness to the players, is a fine example of Mercury's one-mike engineering technique. —P.H.R.

GEMINIANI: *Six Concerti Grossi, Opus 6;* English Baroque Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Westminster WN-18002, \$4.98, and SWN-18002, \$3.98.

▲THE MUSICAL and intellectual aspects of Scherchen's artistry are richly set forth in these early 18th-century concerti grossi by an Italian composer who became one of the most famous musicians of his time. In these works, Geminiani, a pupil of Corelli, gave new vitality to the concerto grosso form with his more sensuous expressiveness and his intellectual nobility of thought. He was a master at technical subtleties, a fact that Scherchen fully appreciates, which makes his renditions more illuminating experiences than those by Rolf Reinhardt and his musically accomplished group (Vox P-8290). The latter's performances seem rather academically prescribed when compared with Scherchen's, whose absorption with detail and the pulsing life of the music holds the listener's attention throughout the entire set. Reinhardt's performances lack sufficient variety to escape the danger of monotony. It is seldom that one encounters an experience like Scherchen provides in music of this kind.

Geminiani has deftly varied the character of these works even though the form and style are closely adhered to. How closely he seems at times akin to Handel, and this similarity is grasped and fully understood by Scherchen. All six of these works are worth knowing though the second (which Toscanini often programmed) and the sixth are the best. However, the third remains an equal favorite of mine.

The English Baroque Orchestra is a proficient group of musicians. The ensemble is a small one, no need for larger forces in music of this kind. The solo group (concertino) comprise a string quartet and the *tutti*, or string orchestra, requires no more than a handful of first and second violins, a harpsichord and cello.

The recording is very lifelike with every instrumental detail clearly outlined.

—P.H.R.

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GLUCK (arr. Mottl): *Ballet Suite No. 1;* **GRETRY (arr. Lambert):** *Ballet Suite;* New Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Robert Irving. London LL-1234, \$3.98.

▲THERE are those who frown on scores like these, but there was a time when they were heard in our concert halls. Walter Damrosch in the old days used to program the Gluck suite which, in its way, is quite winning with the *Dance of the Blessed Spirits* from *Orpheus*, the charming *Musette* from *Armide*, and five other selections. The twelve Grétry dances are by no means as engaging as the Gluck music; they are lightweight, probably good for background music but hardly for serious listening. I believe that Lambert devised this suite for the Sadler's Wells Ballet. Dancers may find these pieces useful to them, but I would not want to predict listener interest. Robert Irving does not seem to have been especially inspired by these scores—except in the *Dance from Orpheus* which is blessed by some lovely flute playing by Geoffrey Gilbert. Joseph Keilberth has performed the Gluck suite with better tonal contrast (Urania 7018), which is coupled with a work called *Fruehlingsfeier*, arranged from Gluck's music, that is especially engaging for the charming singing of the Berlin Mozart Boys Choir.

—P.H.R.

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GRIEG: *Peer Gynt Suites Nos. 1 and 2;* **BIZET:** *L'Arlésienne Suites Nos. 1 and 2;* Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Columbia ML-5035, \$4.98.

▲SUMPTUOUS sound but somewhat dark-hued with the heavy reverberation that prevails at the Philadelphia Academy on the low end. Having heard the Philadelphia Orchestra in New York at Carnegie Hall, where the reverberation is of a lesser degree, I am of the opinion that this superb orchestra sounds better out of its native bailiwick. Moreover, the crowding of two suites on a single side of a disc may be commercially good value, but reproductively it does not serve the music as advantageously as one suite to a side. More sensible for sound values, if not sumptuous tone, is the Fiedler recording of the Grieg suites and the Cluytens's recording of the Bizet. The ecstatic or entranced picture of Ormandy on the cover suggests absorption with musical sounds rather than musical convictions, but with the resources of an orchestra like the Philadelphia he does not have to personalize (or does he?) music like this. If less refined in orchestral texture, I still prefer the *Peer Gynt* Stage Version issued by Mercury and the *L'Arlésienne* of Stokowski or Cluytens.

—P.H.R.

GROFE: *Grand Canyon Suite;* **GERSHWIN:** *El Salón México;* Boston Pops Orchestra conducted by Arthur Fiedler. RCA Victor LM-1928, \$3.98.

▲ORCHESTRAS as well-traditioned as the Koussevitzky-built BSO do not change their habits with repertory of no compelling interest to subsequent masters. Munch does not give a hoot about this Copland piece, which was one of K's specialties. As a consequence it comes out here, no matter Fiedler's shepherding, exactly as it used to under the old man. Liberties are taken at the same points, and the emphases are identical. Wonderful, but not for score-sticklers. The Grofé is notable mostly for its sonic beauties (Leo Litwin's celesta sounds for all the world as if it were concealed in the loudspeaker). Otherwise, it still seems to me that Toscanini said the last word on this work. He made it go, made it music, and nobody else ever has quite achieved that minor miracle, not even the redoubtable Fiedler.

—J.L.

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HARRIS: *Fantasy for Piano and Orchestra;* *Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight;* respectively Johana Harris (piano) with the M-G-M Symphony Orchestra conducted by Izler Solomon and Nell Tangeman (mezzo) with Samuel Thaviu (violin), Theo Salzman (cello) and Mrs. Harris. M-G-M E-3210, \$3.98.

▲THE case of Roy Harris promises to be in critical litigation *ad infinitum*. His *Third Symphony* and his much more recent *Violin Sonata* are masterworks, I am sure. Everything else he has done somehow gets hoist on a pretentious esthetic petard. The *Fantasy* of 1954 is a muscle-bound torso of innocent folk tunes, with no head to give it any direction at all. The "cantata of lamentation" after Vachel Lindsay, also written last year, is momentarily impressive but rather a bore the second time around. I don't know. Harris is a composer of substance and certain of his pieces have shown remarkable staying powers, so it would not do to write off these latest and expect that to be the end of them. It is good, in any event, to have them in the catalogues, the better to check our first impressions later on. The performances presumably are authentic, the sound excellent.

—J.L.

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HAYDN: *Harpsichord Concertos in D, G, and F;* *Concertino in C;* Robert Veyron-Lacroix (harpsichord) and the Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Milan Horvat. Westminster WN-18042, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲ALL of these are early works, the one in D being by now an old favorite thanks to the devoted attentions of Wanda Landowska from way back. The *Concertino* is alternately known as a divertimento, although I do not find it among

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the many Haydn divertimentos on LP. Veyron-Lacroix is not much given to subtlety of expression, but his straightforward playing probably does no disservice. Horvat's accompaniments are brisk, sometimes even brusque. But the disc is a sensational bargain just the same. Full-bodied sound, with the solo instrument well forward at all times.

—J.L.

LALO: *Symphonie Espagnole*; David Oistrakh (violin) and the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Jean Martinon. Angel 35205, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲AS I write this notice the legendary Oistrakh is about to make his American debut. This latest phonographic evidence of his acknowledged gifts will be greeted eagerly by the loyal clique that was not deterred even when its idol had been execrably recorded, which used to be all the time before his emergence under the Angel aegis. Happily, his more recent labors have not been unrequited in terms of extra-musical collaboration. The distinguished Philharmonia plays with its wonted sumptuousness, and the Oistrakh tone never was more richly reproduced. The overall sound is good by the highest current standards, although not as flattering as that given Milstein or Campoli, either of whom continues to be entirely competitive.

—J.L.

LISZT: *Hungarian Fantasy; Concerto No. 1 in E flat*; Geza Anda (piano) with Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Otto Ackermann. Angel LP disc 35268, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

LISZT: *Hungarian Fantasy; FALLA: Dances from Three-Cornered Hat; PAULAU: Marche Burlesque and Hommage à Debussy; RODRIGO: Homenaje a la Tempranica; ITURBI: Seguidillas; CHAVARRI: Interior from Valencianos*; Jose Iturbi (piano) and conducting the Valencia Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LP disc LM-1937, \$3.98.

▲TECHNICALLY, Angel's new recording is one of the finest in its catalog. The performances it preserves is almost as splendid, too. Anda is occasionally over-rhetorical and rhythmically wayward, but for the most part he once again impresses as a "big" pianist with a bright future ahead of him. He is more successful with the *Hungarian Fantasy* than the concerto; he gets perfect support from the wonderful Philharmonia Orchestra under Ackermann. Anda's personal poetry is a far cry from Iturbi's brilliance in the same fantasy, but the Spanish pianist plays with a gleaming tone and an élan that young Anda cannot quite match as yet. There is, however, little poetry in Iturbi's playing and the orchestra is by no means first class. The recording is scarcely free from distortion either. The

recital of Spanish orchestral music has been lifted from an earlier release and is notable only for the passionate, boisterous playing of Falla's invigorating and colorful dances from *Three-Cornered Hat*. —C.J.L.

■
MOZART: *Piano Concerto in E flat, K. 271; Rondo in A, K. 386*; Clara Haskil (piano) and the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted respectively by Paul Sacher and Bernhard Paumgartner. Epic LC-3162, \$3.98. *Piano Concerto in A, K. 488; Piano Concerto in D minor, K. 466*; same artists, Epic LC-3163, \$3.98.

▲TIDY, I suppose, would be the word for these performances, none of which is ideally recorded by the Mozartean scale of sonic values. The exquisite *K. 271* is more sensibly coupled in a recent London issue, and the latter has gorgeous sound as well. The second disc herewith, pairing two of the late, great concertos, will withstand shopping comparisons only if the buyer happens to want both works in one package. Haskil has done the *K. 466* before, for Westminster. That was a finer engineering job, but she plays with more style in the version at hand. However, be forewarned that the old Walter shellac is about to re-appear on LP. —J.L.

■
PAGANINI: *Violin Concerti Nos. 1 and 2, Op. 6 and 7*; Ruggiero Ricci (violin) and the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Anthony Collins. London LL-1215, \$3.98.

▲THE conductor abridged several of the *Op. 6* tuttis to facilitate inclusion of the entire work on one side. Ricci uses the Sauret cadenza. In the *Op. 7* he plays one edited by the pianist Artur Balsam (!). Since this violinist earned so much of his considerable reputation with a marked propensity for Paganini it behooves us to speak with respect of his marvelous agility. He always could command awe for sheer output of notes per second, still does. Now, a virtuosic flair may be quite enough to carry this loaf of musical carbohydrates, and I would not insist otherwise. But there is no gainsaying the occasional inaccuracy of Ricci's intonation, particularly in those passages that ask more of singing tone than flashy finger technique. String folk won't mind because they will appreciate the other manifest virtues. General listeners, unaware of the credit due on points, probably will wince here and there. In sum, a revelation, but not very slickly presented.

—J.L.

■
SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 4 in A minor, Op. 63; Symphony No. 5 in E flat, Op. 82*; Eugene Ormandy conducting the Philadelphia Orchestra. Columbia ML-5045, \$4.98.

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 5, Op. 82; Night Ride and Sunrise—Symphonic*

Poem, Op. 55; Anthony Collins conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. London LL-1276, \$3.98.

▲ORMANDY'S latest service to Sibelius is in commemoration of the composer's 90th Birthday, which takes place on December 8th. Appraised as birthday presents, these recordings from the famous Philadelphia Orchestra and its proficient conductor are indeed fine gifts to add to the growing Sibelius recorded repertory. (Generous of heart, he has endorsed the work of all great conductors.) Interpretatively, they reveal just and sound evaluations with the type of virtuosic sweep expected from the conductor and his splendid orchestra, though without the penetration and insight that other conductors bring to these scores. In the *Fourth Symphony*, I think the Scandinavian conductor, Sixten Ehrling, conveys the essence of the symphony's inspiration in which Sibelius seems "alone with nature's breathing things." Karajan exercises more restraint than most in this score, in a performance that is equally effective in its way as the more laconic one of Ehrling. The otherwise musicianly approach of Collins does not result in as tense a performance as any of the ones mentioned above. There is much to say for Collins' performance of the *Fifth Symphony*, however, in which a more ardent warmth is apparent and at the same time a strength of purpose that does full justice to the drive of the music. In this symphony, he definitely challenges the equally fine work of Karajan, Ehrling and Ormandy, though to my ears the Karajan remains a rare musical experience with its more vivid sound. *Night Ride and Sunrise* is not one of Sibelius' best tone poems. It was conceived by the composer in a train while on the way to Rome, though its galloping, trochaic meter seems more suggestive of galloping horses. The best part of this work is the Sunrise section with its effective use of brasses. Collins does justice to the work, but he should never allow such a conventional composition to follow after the symphony. It remains an indisputable letdown. The recording in the London disc is excellent in every way. The listener will hardly go wrong with any of the performances mentioned above; his choice may well be governed by the couplings.

—P.H.R.

■
STRAVINSKY: *Petrouchka*; Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Hermann Scherchen. Westminster W-LAB-7011, \$7.50.

▲ONE must claim first off that this is in general the very finest disc Westminster has issued in its LAB series. The sound is marvelously detailed, clean, sparkling, and spacious. Whether the microphone set up was changed for this session from the usual LAB take or whether it is just that *Petrouchka* flourishes with this type of

recording, it is hard to say. In any event, this issue is distinguished by a good, full string tone and some of the other LAB releases are in contrast a bit undernourished in the strings. There has never been anything else in the earlier issues, certainly that one could carp about mechanically speaking. As for music making, the LAB series (like any other) has had its ups and downs. This new *Petrouchka* is decidedly on the high side, and off hand I can't think of another modern score Scherchen has presented so triumphantly. There is room for argument with two of the tempi employed but little else. Ansermet's reading of the score is a bit more acute, to be sure; but unless London decides to re-record, this Westminster disc must stand as the preferred version with more of *Petrouchka* pleasingly displayed than is available elsewhere. —C.J.L.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Concerto No. 2 in G, Op. 44*; **SCRIABIN:** *Concerto in F sharp minor, Op. 20*; Friedrich Wuehrer with Pro Musica Orchestra, Vienna conducted by Heinrich Hollrieser and Hans Swarowsky (in Scriabin). Vox LP disc PL-9200, \$5.95.

▲THE LYRICISM of Tchaikovsky's second piano concerto is very pleasing and a good anecdote to the more famous first concerto; but, in truth, the second does not possess sufficient dramatic urgency and for that reason few will ever accept it (as some musicians do) as the superior Tchaikovsky piano concerto. This new recording of the work in question boasts good piano sound if nothing else, but it is an unsatisfactory statement of the score because of the huge cuts in the third movement. Wuehrer plays competently and coolly both here and in the Scriabin concerto, that formless work that derives much from Chopin. The Scriabin is gracefully written for the piano, however, no question about that. —C.J.L.

CHAMBER MUSIC

BACH: *Suites for Unaccompanied Cello, Nos. 4 and 5*; Antonio Janigro (cello). Westminster WN- and SWN-18073, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲AT this late date Janigro needs no advocacy. His sober musicianship has been applied to the Bach suites with particular success in the past, and with this third and final disc in the series it is again resplendently manifest. Only the phenomenal Starker merits consideration as a competitor, but his surpassing artistry somehow makes this music sound more like Bartók than Bach, which is all right if you do not insist on dispassionate dedication. The essential Bachian style is Janigro's special province, and he surveys this domain with sovereign assurance. Close-up sound. —J.L.

BLOCH: *Quintet for Piano and Strings*; Johana Harris and the Walden String Quartet. MGM-E3229, \$3.98.

▲WHEN the Chigi Quintet's performance of this work was issued in 1951, Anson W. Peckham wrote as follows: "Bloch, who utilized Hebraic themes in other important scores, does not leave the realm of pure, intense musical lyricism in this work, which is one of his most academic. This is not an easy score to grasp immediately. It is at times severely introspective, and throughout, completely uncompromising. . . The Chigi Quintet performs the quintet in the very best tradition of Italian instrumentalism, with a complete devotion to its particularly demanding requirements. The recording is clear and faithful." Despite its uncompromising characteristics, this work is more or less rhapsodic throughout with much emotional variety and rhythmic vitality. The work dates from 1923, a period of more or less experimentation with most composers, and Bloch's demand for quarter notes seems to have been an experimentation here which he did not see fit to return to again. This is strong work—one that can stand a more vital approach than the gifted Chigi ensemble summon, for all their devotion to the music. Back in the 1930s, Alfredo Casella and the Pro Arte Quartet performed this work in a more vital manner. Especially admirable was the piano work of Casella. Here, I find Johana Harris a stronger and more assertive pianist than Sergio Lorenzi of the Chigi ensemble, and the Walden Quartet—a fine organization, with all the technical finesse one could ask—provide a more passionate energy in their playing than the Chigi Quintet. With clearer and fuller reproduction, this issue serves Bloch's music more advantageously.

—P.H.R.

CHAUSSON: *Concerto in D, for Violin, Piano and String Quartet*; Zino Franciscatti, Robert Casadesus, The Guilet Quartet. Columbia ML-4998, \$4.98.

▲THIS performance is in commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the birth of Chausson. Entrusted to a group of French musicians in the major roles—solo violin, solo piano and first violin of the quartet, the work emerges in a performance that in spirit and expressiveness recalls the old Thibaud, Cortot version. The Heifetz-Sanroma-Musical Art Quartet version is lacking in the delicacy, refinement and correct pacing of the movements, and the Kaufman-Balsam-Pascal Quartet version is coarse in texture in comparison to this new one. This work, a modern application, for its time (1891), of the 18th-century chamber concerto form, owns none of the Franckian or Wagnerian characteristics of the composer's *Symphony in B flat*. Its noble sincerity is apparent from the opening theme, but the work improves as it unfolds with a lovely slow

movement that hints at inner torment, and a vigorous and adventuresome finale. The recording is clear and lifelike though the balance is slightly marred by the prominence of the piano. —P.H.R.

ENESCO: *Sonata No. 3 in A minor, Op. 25*; **JANACEK:** *Sonata for Violin and Piano*; Rafael Druian (violin) and John Simms (piano). Mercury MG-80001, \$3.98.

▲IN their debut recording, Rafael Druian and John Simms played Bartók's *Sonata No. 2* and Ravel's only *Violin Sonata*, which received praiseworthy reviews. I have always been an admirer of Enesco's chamber music and his third sonata for violin and piano, marked "In the Popular Roumanian Style", is a highly imaginative opus—rhapsodic and exotic. As the annotator says, this work "makes use of no Roumanian folk tunes as such, but is rather—in the finest sense of the word—a potent distillation of the 'musical dialect' so characteristic of the dances and laments sung and played by shepherds, mountaineers and gypsies throughout the length and breadth" of Roumania. It is, in its way, atmospheric music that grows on one. The Janacek, of which I previously wrote in connection with the Barylli-Holetschek performance (see February issue) is a work of melodic strength, dramatic intensity and often agitated rhythms. In no way is it "impregnated with Hungarian nationalism," as suggested by one writer, since its idiom was derived from Janacek's absorption with Czech national influences. Druian and Simms play this work with more conviction than Barylli and Holetschek did, and the violin tone here is less beset with harshness of sound. However, the Westminster disc is rewarding for the Barylli ensemble's playing of Janacek's *Concertino*, a fine score. Druian and Simms do justice to the Enesco work, yet in view of the fact that Enesco left us a recording of his *Sonata No. 2* in which his musical magic is bequeathed to posterity, I could have wished that he had also performed this sonata. The recording is excellent in every way. —P.H.R.

Harp Recital No. 2: *Fantaisie, Op. 35* (Spohr), *Rapsodie* (Grandjany), *Fantasy on Bashkir Themes* for flute and harp (Gretchaninov), *Sonata* for flute and harp (Schaposchnikov), *Danse lente* for flute and harp (Jongen), *Menuetto* from *L'Arlesienne Suite No. 2* (Bizet-Guiraud), *Vers la source dans le bois* and *Féerie—Prélude and Danse* (Tournier); Edward Vito (harp) and Jean Roberts (flute). Period SPL-721, \$4.98.

▲TO turn from Salzedo's *Scintillation* (a simultaneous Mercury release) to this disc is to marvel at the expressive possibilities of the harp within its narrow compass. In general I continue to feel that "a little of this goes a long way"—meaning that the

harp simply does not edify—but it must be conceded that the range of values represented herewith, both musical and sonic, is quite astonishing. Excepting the Bizet snippet all of Vito's selections are originals, Gretchaninov having himself re-worked his *Fantasy* for this combination. The two Tournier pieces are to harp recitals what Popper's are to cello programs, but the other items are most of them rarities and entirely welcome additions to the LP repertory. Vito plays throughout with his wonted artistry, which is to say that he never indulges in effects for their own sake. So that this recording as a whole is not the sensation, soundwise, that Salzedo's is. To these ears, therefore, it is more of a solace, easier listening. That makes it a more desirable issue from my admittedly prejudiced point of view. The flutist plays with elegance throughout. Excellent studio sound, if not presence itself.

—J.L.

MOZART: *Sonatas for Violin and Piano, K. 454 in B Flat and K. 481 in E Flat*; Joseph Szigeti (violin) and George Szell (piano). Columbia ML-5005, \$4.98.

▲YEARS ago Szell took to the keyboard in a joint recording of the Mozart piano quartets that remains, for me, one of the treasures of the catalogues. Again he has put down his baton to make chamber music, and the results are equally impressive. Szigeti is far from being a great technician but there is a musical quality in his playing that no other violinist of the day can quite equal. Since they are old friends as well as compatriots, we should have expected this disc to be an outstanding contribution to the burgeoning Mozart bi-centennial. And it is at least that. First class sound. The coupling-conscious will have a problem, though. Both of these magnificent late sonatas are otherwise available, and quite satisfactorily. The only solution I can see to this problem is to pick your artists and stay with them. A year hence the lot of them will have covered the entire repertory.

—J.L.

SCINTILLATION—The Harp in High Fidelity: *The Harmonious Blacksmith* (Handel-Salzedo), *Giga* (Corelli-Salzedo), *Menuet d'amour* (Massenet-Salzedo), and *Scintillation, Ballade, Petite Valse, La Desirade and Traipsin' Thru Arkansas* (Salzedo); Carlos Salzedo (harp). Mercury MG-80003, \$4.98.

▲THE piece entitled *Scintillation* deserved to have the entire enterprise named after it, if only on sonic grounds. Granted that a modicum of harpists and general listeners will seek out this album, it seems to have been contrived for the seekers after ever hi-fi. And they will be entranced by it. The title work is full of overflowing with multi-hued new spectra. As expected on past performance,

Salzedo is every minute the master of his instrument (I almost said "artist to his fingertips") so that even at his most sensationally virtuosic there is no sacrificing of musical values as opposed to saleable sounds. Most of the program hardly merits such solicitous attention, but all of it scintillates, anyway, thanks to Salzedo and no less to Mercury, which has outdone itself.

—J.L.

KEYBOARD

BACH: *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor; Preludes and Fugues in E minor, A minor, C, and C minor*; Columbia ML-5040, \$5.95. *Tocatta and Fugue in D minor ("Dorian"); Preludes and Fugues in A, F minor, and B minor*; ML-5041, \$5.95. *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, Prelude and Fugue in G, Six Chorale Preludes*; ML-5042, \$5.95. All in Columbia LP set 5SL-223 (3 discs), \$17.85. Albert Schweitzer (organ).

▲THE IMMENSE love, scholarship, and musical taste Schweitzer brings to this collection of Bach organ works is enough for the enjoyment of some. But those who demand more of the performer's art will be disappointed. Tempi are slow—very slow—execution is ragged in a number of places throughout the recital. There is not always a clear outline of phrase, and the recording blurs some of the *fortissimi*. It is easy to have an attachment to Schweitzer for many reasons, not all of them musical. But the recommendation in this music is to acquire the Walcha performances on Decca.

—C.J.L.

CHOPIN: *Waltzes*; Artur Rubinstein (piano). RCA Victor LP disc LM-1892, \$3.98.

▲VICTOR has given us the Rubinstein performances of all the waltzes of Chopin in sound that is somewhat untypical of what one has grown used to in such a large concert room as Carnegie Hall. The microphone placement seems very close. While the clarity and sonic bite is bracing, the overall sound is hard and a bit tinny.

Rubinstein's playing is mostly magical. He plays Chopin in what has come to be the traditional manner; that is, with left hand matching right hand rubato. I cannot believe this is what Chopin had in mind; his directions (found in his letters) call for a rhythmically steady left hand, such as one uses in the playing of Mozart. Lipatti's superb performance of the waltzes provide one of the few examples of how Chopin himself probably handled rhythm. Be that as it may, Rubinstein's work is effective on its own terms in most of the waltzes (notable exceptions are the rhythmically distorted *Op. 64, No. 3* and *Op. 69, No. 1*) and he

manages to express himself most of the time in healthy, manly fashion. There is air around his playing and most of the melodies are suitably arched. Rubinstein, of course, is a master of his instrument. Of the few remaining masters, your reporter wants to make it clear that Rubinstein is virtually alone among those who play Chopin in the typical manner in his ability to put his technical resources at the service of a comparable musical taste.

—C.J.L.

COUPERIN: *Harpsichord Works—Books I, II, III and IV*; Ruggero Gerlin (harpsichord). London L'Oiseau-Lyre, Two Volumes, each eight discs, Nos. 50052-59 (Vol. 1), 50060-67 (Vol. 2), \$4.98 per disc.

▲DEVOTEES of the harpsichord music of Francois Couperin-le-Grand (1668-1733), one of the lone figures in the world of music and the greatest of the French *clavecinistes* (harpsichordists), are in for an extended treat with this complete issue of his keyboard works. Couperin wrote four "Books" of harpsichord pieces, divided into 27 *ordres* (suites) with a varying number of pieces in each. The total number of pieces is 449. Prior to the war Wanda Landowska, who brought about the modern recognition of Couperin as one of the foremost composers of his time, provided the composer's admirers with the most extended group of his pieces in the Couperin Society set, issued by H. M.V., a set that should be dubbed on LP. It is of significance that one of her best pupils, Ruggero Gerlin, has undertaken the task of performing the complete keyboard works of Couperin which, many of us had hoped Landowska might have done. The magnitude of such an undertaking imposes a formidable artistic responsibility on a player which, it must be said, Gerlin has valiantly met. His carefully varied registration conveys the extent of his absorption with the music, as does his care in playing the ornamentations according to the composer's directions. His choice of tempi, however, is frequently open to debate, being on the slow side as compared with some of Landowska's performances. Landowska has told us that "Couperin counsels playing even the tender pieces not too slowly on the harpsichord, it being possible to keep the cadence and the taste independently of the degree of speed." In my estimation, Landowska reveals more imagination in her playing than Gerlin, but one can hardly deny that Gerlin has the technical skill and taste to serve advantageously the composer.

Too few discs contain a complete suite since their varying length make it necessary to carry over to another record face. Important exceptions are the Eighth Suite—headed by *La Raphaële* and containing the great *Passacaille* (in which Gerlin does not succeed in effacing mem-

ories of Landowska)(disc 50058), and the Twenty-sixth Suite—regarded by some as one of the best with such fine pieces as *La Convalescente*, *L'Épineuse*, and *La Pantomime*, and also the Twenty-seventh ending with *L'Art de toucher le clavecin* (disc 50067). Those who want only one or two records are recommended to these discs.

Gerlin plays on a Pleyel harpsichord with a prevaillingly bright, but nasal, tone throughout its registers. There is no mechanical noise suggesting too close proximity of the microphone though there are some pre-echoes. The recording is realistic in sound much in the manner, we can imagine, it would be if we were in the same room with it. A concert hall atmosphere has been wisely avoided, yet there is sufficient reverberation to avoid tonal dryness. In striving, I feel certain, for a certain amount of scholarly approval, Gerlin has not avoided some monotony in his playing. Wanda Landowska's greater fluency and more imaginative use of registrations, albeit not always in the past without their mechanical forebodings, succeed in avoiding this feeling of monotony. She realizes fully the significance of Couperin, speaking of him in affectionate terms as would one who admires the music of Chopin, another lone figure in the world of music.

Because of the importance of Couperin's work for his instrument and also Chopin's for his, the two are often linked for their remarkable creative abilities in relation to their respective instruments. Thus, Herbert Wiseman, writing in Oxford's *Heritage of Music*, Vol. II, tells us that though both composers were indebted to others who went before them; both alike "brought such an originality of outlook, such a genius for their instruments, to bear on their work that each in his own particular sphere stands alone, without a rival and without even a companion."

—P.H.R.

DEBUSSY: *Etudes; D'un cahier d'esquisses*; Walter Gieseking (piano). Angel LP disc 35250, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲WITH this issue Gieseking has completed the project of recording all the solo piano literature by Claude Debussy. Readers of these columns are aware of the enthusiasm with which each previous release has been greeted. It will surely come as no surprise to learn that this disc is up to the top-lofty standards already established. In the case of the neglected *Etudes*, one can say that Gieseking has truly rehabilitated them. This is the first time he has recorded them; so, for the first time one can report that each is truly a jewel. Gieseking has discovered tiny nuances and subtle balances that will force many to change their opinions about these works. Relegated to the dustbin by those who felt they were expressively arid and for pianists only,

the *Etudes* sparkle under the Gieseking touch and emerge as fascinating pieces which exploit the resources of the modern piano tastefully and imaginatively. A few of the numbers even turn out to be moving. The Angel recording is a bit too heavy in the bass; but when the bass is cut, the disc gives us a rather faithful sound. —C.J.L.

LISZT: *Harmonies Poétiques et Religieuses* (5 pieces); Alfred Brendel (piano). Vox LP disc PL-9430, \$5.95.

▲IF all it took to present this segment of the Liszt repertory were musicality, good will, and pleasing tone, then one could accept Brendel's playing as a model. That is, alas, just about half of what it takes. It takes temperament, a big technique under iron control, among other things—just what Brendel cannot offer us. Does anyone suppose Liszt composed any of these pieces because he just wanted to make selfless music? Not on your life! He wished, along with other desires, to make a personal impression in the best mid-19th century romantic fashion. . . the individual, the artist against the world, fighting against insurmountable odds and emerging triumphant. There is no notion of this feeling in Brendel's performances of *Bénédiction de Dieu dans la solitude*, *Funérailles* or in the rarely heard *Cantique d'amour*, *Invocation*, or *Pensée des morts*. Good piano sound. —C.J.L.

PROKOFIEV: *Sonata No. 9 in C, Op. 103; Ten Pieces from Cinderella*; MGM LP disc E-3192, \$3.98. **GRIEG:** *Lyric Pieces, Books 1 and 2*; MGM LP disc E-3196, \$3.98. Menahem Pressler (piano).

▲THIS DISC gives Americans their first opportunity to hear Prokofiev's last piano sonata. Written between 1945 and 1947, it falls chronologically between the late Russian composer's fifth and sixth symphonies. It is, I am afraid, a disappointment. Romantic in style, it is cast in four movement form and has a running time of a little under a half an hour. It reflects the skill of the composer able to put his technique in motion and to sustain it over a period of time without its ever achieving any coherent, much less vital, expression. The ten pieces arranged by the composer for the piano from his wartime ballet score *Cinderella* are not very effective either. It is doubted whether a pianist of higher attainments than Pressler could do much with this music. Pressler is capable, however, as anyone who hears his recording of the Grieg *Lyric Pieces* will attest. Not in the Rubinstein or Gieseking class for this music, to be sure, but satisfying all the same. MGM has contributed close up recordings of unusual fidelity. —C.J.L.

RAMEAU: *Les Tricoteuses, L'Enharmonique, Les Menuets, La Joyeuse, L'Égyptienne, La Triomphante*; **COUPERIN:** *La Bandoline, Les Moissonneurs, Le Dodo, Les Tricoteuses, Le Tic-Toc-Choc*; **POULENC:** *Improvisation No. 5 in A minor*; **FRANCAIX:** *La Tendre, La Moderne*; **TAILLEFERRE:** *Valse Lente, Larghetto*; **CASADESUS:** *Sardane, Résonances, Toccata*; Jean Casadesus (piano). Angel LP disc 35261, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲THE PIANO tone of this recording seems restricted in dynamics, and there is distortion here and there to spoil somewhat one's enjoyment of a tastefully selected program. The pianist is, of course, the son of the famous Robert Casadesus. His playing has many of his father's hallmarks—clean outline of phrase, discreet pedaling, attention to composer's indications, and musical spirit. Young Jean does not yet have the finger technique of his father; he cannot be fastidious enough with the fine Rameau and Couperin works to make such things as their ornamentation seem spontaneous. It is in the modern works that the pianist makes his best impression. He plays the two of Francaix's delightful *Five Sketches of Young Girls* to a fare-thee-well. The bittersweet selections of Germaine Tailleferre with their popular-song connotations are made to seem pleasing and just a little affecting. The lively *Sardane* is given a vigorous reading. The *Toccata*, a display piece tailored by the elder Casadesus for his own special gifts, imposes too great a strain on Jean's technical equipment. —C.J.L.

SCHUBERT: *Impromptus, Op. 90 and 142*; Ingrid Haebler (piano). Vox LP disc PL-8940, \$5.95. **MOZART:** *Concerto No. 6 in B flat, K. 238; Concerto No. 8 in C, K. 246*; Ingrid Haebler with Pro Musica Orchestra, Vienna conducted by Heinrich Hollreiser. Vox LP disc PL-9290, \$5.95.

▲MISS HAEBLER is known to many of us for her lovely playing of several Mozart piano concertos. There is a purity about her tone, her cantabile, her style that is right for Mozart. Here is the same delightful story all over again in K.238 and the more impressive K.246. The recording for this disc is very pleasing, particularly the piano tone. The orchestra is small, as is appropriate for these works; Hollreiser provides acceptable accompaniments. When it comes to Schubert (and I would imagine any of the 19th-century romantics), Miss Haebler is, for the moment at least, overreaching herself. She does not have the physical strength or, more important, the temperament to project these warm, rambling compositions. She does not have the rhetoric in her fingers, either. She seems to have dutifully learned the romantic style, but

she does not feel it. You can tell by the way she used tempo rubato, for one thing. Curzon and Schnabel are the choruses for this music. —C.J.L.

SCHUMANN: *Faschingsschwank aus Wien, Op. 26; Abegg Variations, Op. 1; Arabesque, Op. 18; Blumenstueck, Op. 19; Joerg Demus (piano). Westminster LP disc SWN or WN18061, \$3.98 or \$4.98.*

▲THIS seems to me easily the finest playing Demus has yet vouchsafed on records. Never before has his work appeared so poised, so controlled in the works of Schumann. Not one of the pieces here represented have found a more convincing interpreter in the annals of LP. There are a few strange touches in the peculiarly neglected *Faschingsschwank* and a moment of indecision in the *Arabesque*, but elsewhere all is masterful, tender and manly. The delicate and charming performance of the *Abegg Variations* was, indeed, be considered uncommon at any time. The recording is magnificent, but the surfaces on my copy were noisy from time to time. —C.J.L.

SCHUMANN: *Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 11; MENDELSSOHN: Andante and Rondo Capriccioso in E, Op. 14; SCHUBERT: Impromptus Nos. 3 and 4, Op. 90; WEBER: Invitation to the Dance; Alexander Brailowsky (piano). RCA Victor LM-1918, \$3.98.*

▲THIS is an attractive recital of selections by four of the high romantic composers of the 19th century. This is music that Brailowsky has played for many years—music that he clearly loves and respects. Uneven in effectiveness throughout the past few years, Brailowsky on this occasion seems to be at the top of his present powers. The Schumann sonata emerges a bit mannered here and there and its execution is not invariably tidy, but there is a welcome flow and a good sense of order in the overall presentation. The rendition is, indeed, the best now available on LP. About the same remarks concerning Brailowsky's playing of the Schumann apply to the remainder of this recital; but here it is up against rather more severe competition, especially in the case of Schnabel's interpretations of the Schubert *Impromptus*. The selections on this disc appear to have been recorded at different sessions. The Schumann is not so bright in sound as the other works and in the opening movement it is afflicted with noisy surfaces. The general sound throughout is very close, clear, but a bit "boxy" as to resonance. —C.J.L.

WEBER: *Sonata No. 1 in C, Op. 24; Sonata No. 2 in A flat, Op. 39; Annie d'Arco (piano). Oiseau-Lyre LP disc OL-50068, \$4.98.*

▲THE Weber piano sonatas are among the most neglected of all keyboard music of real quality. It is difficult to believe that the lovely A flat sonata has never before had representation in the LP catalog, but such has been the lamentable case. Sad to say, the performances of Annie d'Arco do not remedy the situation in so far as showing a listener just how fine this music is, for Miss d'Arco does not approach the technical standards necessary for making these sonatas glow. Those unfamiliar with the compositions should be told that structurally they are no great shakes, but they are filled with melodic beauties and are ever so gratefully written for the piano. They are wonderfully fanciful, too. To be sure, the first movement of the C major Sonata is dull; likewise, the final movement of the A flat. But that should not keep one from enjoying the beauties and grandeurs of all the rest. We need more and better performances of Weber's lovely sonatas. Here is something that record companies looking for fresh repertory should investigate and do something about. —C.J.L.

WIDOR: *Symphony No. 5 in F minor, Op. 42, No. 1; Feike Asme (organ). Epic LP disc LC-3156, \$3.98.*

▲THIS is perhaps the best single work famed organist-composer Widor ever created. Certainly the fifth movement finale is a brilliant toccata and a favorite of organists who like to program something that will not pale by the side of the bread-and-butter Bach selections. Widor's work today does seem, however, a bit old fashioned aesthetically. The organ as symphony orchestra has been surely done to death. One would like to recommend this disc to persons interested in the history of organ composition, but that is difficult. For Asme cannot play with the clarity, brilliance, and force that this music requires. Furthermore, the instrument employed is not of the type Widor had in mind for the bulk of his output. Need a big, late 19th century French organ for that. —C.J.L.

VOICE

BRITTEN: *Winter Winds, Op. 52; Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo, Op. 22; Peter Pears (tenor) with Benjamin Britten (piano). London LL-1204, \$3.98.*

BRITTEN: *Saint Nicholas, Op. 42 (Cantata for tenor solo, mixed chorus, piano duet, strings, percussion and organ); Peter Pears (tenor), David Hemmings (Boy Soprano), Aldeburgh Festival Choir and Orchestra conducted by Benjamin Britten. London LL-1254, \$3.98.*

▲IN his settings of eight poems by Thomas Hardy—*Winter Winds*—Britten

has written one of his finest song cycles to date. These poems, which the annotator Donald Mitchell aptly describes as "sober, 'prose' diction," are ingeniously set by the composer in a free vocal style which, as Mr. Mitchell points out, maintains "the level of narrative without dropping into recitative proper and yet flower into immediate song whenever the occasion demands." The rhythmic subtleties that Britten achieves are a clear proof of his technical adroitness as is the economical reuse of material in his accompaniments. In each song, the composer sustains a mood and, though the subjects are unrelated, the cycle as a whole holds our interest in the same way that his *Serenade* does. The *Michelangelo Sonnets*, already known to us from 78-rpm recordings, is an earlier and more complex opus. As fascinating as the composer's French cycle *Les Illuminations* is, this Italian cycle is of deeper significance and far more moving. The technique employed in the voice and piano is more difficult than in *Winter Winds*; sometimes it seems almost over-elaborated and yet the style is in keeping with the classical proportions of these Italian poems. Britten in these cycles does not play upon our emotions alone but rather upon our minds whereby our emotions are evoked. I can imagine no singer better suited to sing these cycles than Peter Pears, whose personal,

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and yet impersonal, artistry evoke our thoughtful reception of the songs.

In the cantata *Saint Nicholas*, the patron saint of all children, Britten has devised one of his most beautiful vocal works, both songful and narrative. In nine parts, its libretto is founded on legendary incidents in the life of the Saint. The charm of this opus is its use of a boy soprano and a boy's choir and the ingenious usage the composer makes of a small instrumental ensemble. The work was written originally for the centenary celebrations of Lansing College, where Peter Pears was educated. With Peter Pears and Benjamin Britten as the main protagonists, the performance is deeply impressive as well as authoritative.

Both the song cycles and the cantata are excellently recorded, with the right amount of reverberation in the former, as well as balance between voice and piano, to provide an intimate concert hall atmosphere. —P.H.R.

CHRISTMAS MUSIC: *O leave your sheep* (Old French, arr. Haselhurst); *One winter night* (Reginald Hunt); *Good King Wenceslas* (English); *Christmas in the wood* (Mabel Daniels); *The morning star on high is glowing* (Praetorius); *The holly and the ivy* (arr. Walford Davies); *There was a rosebud bloomed in the snow* (Martin Shaw); *Villagers all this frosty night* (James Angel); *O magnum mysterium* (Victoria); *In the bleak mid-winter* (Harold Darke); *To us is born Immanuel* (Praetorius); *Deck the hall* (arr. Erickson); *Lullay my liking* (Holst); *Patapan* (arr. Martin Shaw); *In dulci jubilo* (Pearsall, arr. Westbrook); *Hymn for Christmas Day* (John Goss); Trinity Choir, New Haven, conducted by G. Huntington Byles. Overtone OVER 11, \$5.95.

▲TO WHAT extent the Christmas repertoire has changed during the last couple of decades is demonstrated by this fresh and enjoyable program. There is probably something new here for everybody along with such old favorites as *Good King Wenceslas* (rather slowly sung) and *In dulci jubilo* (which has not lost its power to move). The surprises include *The holly and the ivy* arranged by Davies, not Boughton, and *Mid-winter* set by Harold Darke, not Holst. I also liked *One winter night*, which was new to me, and *Christmas in the wood*, with its fine text by Frances Frost. The singing is healthy and for the most part secure, though, as with most boy choirs, there are moments of human frailty. Several sweet-voiced soloists are featured.

—P.L.M.

COUPERIN: *Messe Solennelle*; Gaston Litaize (organ). London Ducretet-Thomson DTL 93039, \$4.98.

▲THIS WORK is the *Messe pour les Paroisses*, one of two organ masses composed by the great Couperin. I note that an American recording of it exists (W. Austin is the organist) but I have not had an opportunity of hearing it. My reaction on listening to this one was that one might approach the recording in two different ways. The first is the obvious one—simply listen to the music. You may find two sides a rather long session with the twenty-two-year-old Couperin, but if you take it a little at a time (assuming you are not averse to this kind of music) you are bound to like it. You might want to take a hint from the program notes of Norbert Dufourq and start not at the beginning but with the Offertory. I think you will find he does not greatly overstate the case in calling this the “most highly-colored page of this mass and the most significant one in all classical French music.” The mass consists of twenty-one pieces to be played during the service: you may, of course, take as much or as little of it at a time as you please. The other approach is to treat the record as a demonstration disc exploiting the resources of the baroque organ. Couperin has designated specific registrations in his score, and M. Litaize has chosen to play the beautiful and historic organ of Saint-Merri because it meets these requirements. He is a musician with a good healthy style and a steady rhythmic sense; his playing is admirably clear. Instead of singling out individual points for admiration, let me simply urge you to hear the record.

—P.L.M.

DOWLAND: *Ayres for 4 Voices*—Nos. 1, 6, 8, 11 and 12 from Book I; Nos. 2, 3, 4, 7, 13 and 18 from Book II; Nos. 10, 15 and 16 from Book III; Nos. 5, 9, and 17 from Book IV; *The Golden Age Singers* (Margaret Field-Hyde, soprano; John Whitworth, counter-tenor; René Soames, tenor; and George Clinton, baritone) and Julian Brean (lute). Westminster Limited Editions Series WLE-102, \$5.75.

▲THE Golden Age Singers are highly regarded abroad, and I seem to remember reading somewhere that they are coming to America this season. They should enjoy immediate approval, particularly from those who hear this advance evidence of their extraordinary musicianship. The lutenist John Dowland (1562-1626) is somewhat better represented on LP than a check of Schwann and Long Player would suggest, but mostly on omnibus recitals that intersperse his deeply touching songs and madrigals with those of other early composers. Westminster apparently will blanket the invaluable Dowland legacy, more or less systematically if not in the ideal original order, because this album is designated “Vol. 1.” The quality of sound is exceptional, the surfaces wonderfully

quiet. The ensemble members, being on the evidence of their surnames mostly English, quite naturally tend to enunciate in accordance with the familiar imperatives of the “British accent”—there being no more graceful way of saying this that comes to me at the moment. As a consequence, therefore, certain words and phrases inevitably will sound “mouthed” to our ears. There is no gainsaying the precision of this group, all the same, and proponents of absolute clarity are reminded that Dowland was himself English, although the language has evolved considerably over the past three centuries. The latter fact, of course, suggests the either-or of modernization (for maximum communication) or the simulation of English as sung circa 1600 (for maximum scholarly satisfaction). The middle ground represented herewith is perhaps the most sensible. Withal an enchanting hour.

—J.L.

HONEGGER: *Cantate de Noel*; Michel Roux (baritone), with Orchestre des Concerts Lamoureux, Elisabeth Brasseur Choir, Petits Chanteurs de Versailles and Maurice Duruflé (organ), conducted by Paul Sacher; **DISTLER:** *Die Weihnachtsgeschichte, Op. 10*; Soloists and Netherlands Madrigal and Motet Choir, conducted by Marinus Voorberg. Epic LC 3153, \$3.98.

▲HERE is something really novel for Christmas. Honegger's *Christmas Cantata* might have been called an international fantasia on Christmas songs and carols. There is a long and sombre opening music described as “an anguished cry of humanity,” then the annunciation by the baritone soloist followed by a host of familiar tunes gradually interweaving and building to a grand climax. The composer has stipulated that each of the songs must be sung in its original language, so that the counterpoint is a matter of tongues as well as tunes. I must confess I was rather dismayed to hear *Susani*, *Susani* emerging in English as *From Heaven on high the angels fly*, for surely this is a German song. The work ends with further elaboration of the melodies in an orchestral postlude. Perhaps this is not a great masterpiece, but I found it good fun untangling the various tunes. The Hugo Distler piece (the work of a young composer who committed suicide in Nazi Germany) descends directly from Heinrich Schuetz, for it is sung unaccompanied by soloists (here unnamed) as Evangelist and Biblical characters, with a choral commentary in the form of variations on *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen*. Perhaps the high spot is the *Magnificat*, sung by Mary with the chorale for background, but the work as a whole is quite moving. The performance is excellent, though the recording lacks a shade or two of realism, and there is a bad echo

at times. No texts are provided.

—P.L.M.

HAYDN: *Die Schöpfung*; Teresa Stich-Randall (soprano); Anny Felbermayer (soprano); Anton Dermota (tenor); Frederick Guthrie (basso); Paul Schoeffler (baritone); Vienna State Opera Chorus and Orchestra, conducted by Mogens Wöldike. Vanguard VRS 471-72, 2 discs, \$9.96.

▲FOR one reason or another neither of the two previous recordings of *The Creation* did the masterpiece anything like justice; it is good to note an impressive improvement in the third. Wöldike's affinity with Haydn is well known; his *tempi* here are always vital, and he holds his forces together admirably. Among the soloists Stich-Randall is outstanding, with her clean, cool vocalism, and she proclaims her texts with more conviction than has sometimes been her habit. Her treatment of the lovely ascending scale line in *With verdure clad* has the needed lift, and she executes her florid passages with ease. Dermota does a thoroughly acceptable job in the tenor solos and ensembles, though his curious way of "chewing" his words occasionally interferes with the vocal line. Guthrie has what seems to be a big bass voice with enormous possibilities. At this point I suspect he is too young for this assignment, for his singing wants the ring of authority. It also wants a steady influence to make his intonation more firm. The Adam and Eve section enlists the sweet youthful voice of Felbermayer and the decidedly mature one of Schoeffler. If the baritone's tones seem frayed, however, his style is still foursquare. The chorus work is solid, clean and well balanced; the orchestra does not miss such effects as that of the leviathan in the bass solo. The reproduction is very good but not perfectly even, due, I believe, to microphone placement.

—P.L.M.

PALESTRINA: *Missa Veni sponsa Christi*; **LIASSO:** *Missa Puisque j'ay perdu*; Vienna Kammerchor, conducted by Hans Gillesberger. Unicorn UNLP 1013, \$3.98.

▲AS I listened to the Palestrina Mass I was struck by the variety of colors the composer gets by the use of different voice qualities. For example, though most of the work is scored for the usual SATB, the *Pleni sunt coeli* is a trio for alto, tenor and bass, the *Benedictus* has two alto parts, the *Agnus Dei* two tenors. The Lasso is a more dramatic work, characteristically a more virtuosic treatment of the text. Palestrina's strength lay to a large extent in his ability to make his settling interesting without any sort of display, any compromise with his essential simplicity. The two works, therefore, make a study in contrasts. The performances are vital,

rather on the intimate side, not concerned with drawn-out effects, not afraid to make shadings both with dynamics and with elastic *tempi*. My one reservation concerns the *staccato* effect used in the *Hosanna* in both Masses. Both singing and reproduction are notable for fine clarity.

SPANISH CHORAL MUSIC: *Ave Maria*; *Jesu dulcis memoria*; *O magnum mysterium* (Victoria); *Puer natus est nobis* (Morales); *Ma voluntat amb la rao s'envolpa* (Brudieu); *Dadme albricias, hijos de Eva* (Anon, ca. 1556); *Ya florecen los arboles, Juan*; *D'aquel pastor de la sierra*; *De los alamos vengo, madre*; *Morenica, dame un beso* (Vasquez); *Sant Josep i la mare de Déu*; *El cant dels ocells*; *El noi de la mare*; *El mal de l'amor*; *Oi Bellem*; *No quiero que me cortejas*; *Sa Ximbomba*; *Paloma revoladora*; *Nana*; *Polo* (traditional); *Capilla Clasica Polifónica*, conducted by Enrique Ribo. Angel 35257, \$4.98.

▲THIS GROUP, we are told, owes its existence to the desire on the part of some students at the Municipal School of Music in Barcelona to get familiar with the works of the great polyphonic masters. Though interrupted by the war, the chorus has been singing since 1935. They perform the beautiful music of Victoria, Morales (a composer unaccountably rare on records), Brudieu and Vasquez in a rather intense style, using a good deal of *sforzando* effect and plenty of shading. Personally I like them better in the Spanish folksong arrangements (some made by the conductor) overdisc. Here they seem thoroughly at home, and the music is delightful. Enough of the songs have Christmas texts to make the issue seasonable.

—P.L.M.

WAGNER: *Tristan und Isolde—Isolde's Narration*; *Die Goetterdaemmerung—Bruennhilde's Immolation*; Martha Moedl (soprano) with Johanna Blatter (mezzo-soprano) and Berlin State Opera Orchestra conducted by Artur Rother. Telefunken LP disc LGX-66036, \$4.98.

▲FOR some time it has been clear that Martha Moedl is a brilliant vocal actress and a vivid theatrical personality especially sympathetic to the emotional climate of Wagner's music dramas. It becomes equally certain with her every recording that such assignments as *Isolde's Narration* and the *Immolation Scene* are beyond her vocal capacities. Moedl's voice, one ventures to say, is not well schooled and it is only sheer effort and will power that allows her to get through such passages that demand massive projection. Under such stress, one wonders how long Moedl's equipment will hold out. It is a strange voice with a different sound in low, middle, and high

registers. The wonder is that it is capable of such stirring emotional communication from time to time. Moedl is well recorded on this occasion and gets fine support from Johanna Blatter in the *Narration*. This section, by the way, does not end conventionally with the close of *Isolde's* curse but continues to the word *Todestrank* just before the brief sailors' choral passage. Rother and his orchestra provide idiomatic support that wants a bit more tonal velvet and dramatic urgency.

—C.J.L.

OPERA SPOTLIGHT

(Continued from page 56)

have wished for Bjoerling in this role, for he alone brings a manly beauty to the role of Don Carlo. Tito Gobbi does some of his best singing to date on records as Rodrigo, notably in the death scene. Christoff brings nobility and dignity to his portrayal of King Philip. His singing is fervent and strong but too much in the manner of Chaliapin as Rossi-Lemieni effects. Neri, as the Grand Inquisitor, is effective, if not as impressive as he was in the Cetra set. Santini's carefully detailed attention to the orchestral playing is most praiseworthy.

The recording is an improvement over the Cetra set, which was very good, more suggestive of the opera house though not as startlingly realistic as Victor's recent *Aida*, also made in the Rome Opera House. Side 4 of the set which I acquired labeled as the conclusion of Act 2 and the opening half of Act 3, where Philip's big aria is heard, proved to be some harpsichord music quite alien to Verdi, which prevented my evaluating Philip's big scene. In utilizing only three discs, instead of the four Cetra uses, the breaks in this set are far less satisfactory, sometimes interrupting dramatic precedents in an unpleasant manner. Mainly for this reason, I would not recommend that listeners part with their Cetra set without making a comparison with the new one.

—P.H.R.

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

BACH: *Six Brandenburg Concerti*; Basle Chamber Orchestra conducted by Paul Sacher. Epic LP set SC-6008 (2 discs), \$7.96.

▲SACHER, a conductor of note in Europe, has long been a champion of contemporary music—particularly that of Stravinsky. He reads the *Brandenburg Concerti* just as he might read a neo-classic score of the Russian master. Everything is cool, poised, and devoid of personality. It is not a bad way to present Bach's secular works and it beats some ways. The Basle Chamber Orchestra is, however, not of the calibre one has previously encountered on LP and its efforts are easily outdistanced by at least two and perhaps three rivals. The preference here is for the excellent Horenstein performances on Vox. The best performances

offered here are of the fourth (the flute parts are very well played) and the fifth. If these should be offered on a separate disc (the number is LC-3167), they might make an attractive purchase (the sixth is also included). Certainly the quality of the recorded sound is exceptionally fine. —C.J.L.

BACH: *Toccata and Fugue in D minor, Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor, Prelude and Triple Fugue in E flat, Prelude and Fugue in A*; Gaston Litaize (organ). London Ducretet-Thomson DTL-93037, \$4.98.

▲A MORE desirable one-disc sampling of Bach's great organ works would be difficult to assemble. These four compositions are key foundation blocks supporting the noble edifice Bach raised to glory of tonal art. The organist presenting these works is Gaston Litaize, an artist heretofore unknown to your reviewer. He is apparently a splendid journeyman without, however, that final sense of identification with the music, that security in transmitting an illusion of complete illumination. He is not helped by the St. Merri organ (Paris) on which he performs. The recording captures all too well the gigantesque quality of the instrument that is fine for 19th-century organ literature but less appropriate for the counterpoint of Bach. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 5 in E flat, Op. 73* Six Variations on the Turkish March, Op. 76; Friedrich Wuehrer (piano) with Pro Musica Orchestra conducted by Heinrich Hollreiser. Vox PL-9490, \$4.98.

▲HERE is a good musical performance of the *Emperor Concerto* that is in no special way memorable. Everything is according to Hoyle, but there is little to suggest that Wuehrer and Hollreiser have done more than to inspect the score and put it back where they found it. They impart little of themselves and have scarcely made a real comment on the music's known expression. The variations are delightful trifles and Wuehrer plays them cleanly. Good sound. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata No. 4 in E flat, Op. 7; Sonata No. 28 in A, Op. 101*; Kurt Appelbaum. Westminster LP disc SWN or WN 18056, \$3.98 or \$4.98.

▲THIS issue is the latest in Appelbaum's project of recording the 32 Beethoven piano sonatas. It is, sad to report, no better than its predecessors. It is blessed with superb sound, however; and it may be interesting to those looking for exceptionally faithful piano tone. Appelbaum's playing suffers from lack of dramatic tension and sufficient grace. The fugue in the final section of Op. 101 is jerky in movement and bumpy fingered. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata No. 23 in F minor, Op. 57; Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13*; Artur Rubinstein (piano). RCA Victor LM-1908, \$3.98.

▲RUBINSTEIN always seems most comfortable with big works he can move around in. So it is that his *Pathétique* emerges a bit stiff and cramped; it is no match really for Ania Dorfmann's superb playing of this music on a Bluebird LP. But the *Appassionata*—that is another story. Rubinstein strikes fire any number of times in his playing of this grand score, particularly in the most outspoken passages. Elsewhere this listener would prefer a more straightforward musical treatment with its accrual of more direct expression. One continues to prefer the Gieseking performance of the *Appassionata* and hopes that Victor will eventually release the Schnabel revelation. —C.J.L.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 1 in C Minor, Op. 68*; The Hague Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Willem van Otterloo. Epic LC-3155, \$3.98.

▲THOSE addicted to big, boomy bass sounds will have a field day with this release. The performance is musically but hardly in a class with the most formidable of its 18 competitors. Engineering-wise, however, it is in a class by itself. Brahms never conceived of anything quite so timpanically,

hi-fi extremists to the contrary notwithstanding. —J.L.

BRUCKNER: *Symphony No. 4 in E flat* ("Romantic"); the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Franz Konwitschny. Supraphon LPV-122/3, \$5.75 each.

▲ONE hopes that this exemplary performance will find its way to an American label. I don't know about the availability of these Czech things to our wandering entrepreneurs, but the tapes must be worth more to their owners in circulation than not, and it is a shame that this highly saleable item is presently to be had only at a premium price and not without a bale of red tape. Be that as it may, I recommend this version as superior by a slight margin and for diverse reasons to each of the others in the catalogue excepting Klemperer's, which is very old but musically a benediction—and also it is the only one-disc *Romantic* around. Konwitschny once did a superb Tchaikovsky *Fifth* and I have been wondering about him ever since. My earlier impression of his work is strengthened by what I hear in these discs. He never lets a line sag or a color fade. His beat is firm but never stodgy. And the orchestra is of course one of the best in Europe. The reproductive quality is not up to the highest current criteria, but that may be attributable to the pressing. I expect that a whiz engineer could not only improve the sound but also get the whole on a maximum of three sides, which is all it should take. —J.L.

CAMPRA: *Rigaudon*; **HANDEL-DUPRE:** *Concerto in F, Op. 4, No. 5*; **BACH:** *Fantasy and Fugue in G minor*; **LANGLAIS:** *Chant Heroique*; **DUPRE:** *Variations on a Noel, Op. 20*; **BRAHMS:** *Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*; **WHITLOCK:** *Paeon*; William Watkins (organ). McIntosh LP disc MM-106, \$4.98.

▲AN exceptionally clean recording is practically the only excuse for issuing this disc. Watkins has neither the temperament nor the skill to carry off the most ambitious works in his recital, and the organ of Calvary Methodist Church, Washington, on which he plays is nothing special (though, praise be, it is no modern superdreadnought either). —C.J.L.

CHRISTMAS SONGS: *Adeste fideles; Schlittenfahrt; God rest you merry, gentlemen; Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle; Fum, fum, fum; Auf dem Berge, da wehet der Wind; Deck the halls with boughs of holly; Jingle bells; Kling, Glockchen; Suesser die Glocken nie klingen; El pequeño sagal; Canzone di sampognari; Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*; Obernkirchen Children's Choir, conducted by Edith Moller. Angel 65021, \$3.98.

▲THE SUCCESS of these youngsters in America made such a recorded program as this inevitable. Once again the microphones have caught the irresistible charm of the choir, and happily the program is reasonably unhackneyed. To be sure, unhackneyed is not the word for *Jingle Bells*, but I guarantee in this performance it will sound like a novelty, quaint accent and all. There is something different, too, about this rather meditative *Adeste fideles* and the leisurely *God rest you merry*. For myself I like the choir best in such lighter fare as *Un flambeau, Jeannette, Isabelle*, or the little Spanish *Fum, fum, fum*. Some of the voices incline to be vibrant in the more serious moments. —P.L.M.

DUKAS: *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*; **SAINT-SAENS:** *Danse macabre* and *Bacchanale* from *Samson et Dalila*; **CHABRIER:** *Marche joyeuse*; Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra of London conducted by Argeo Quadri. Westminster W-LAB 7009, \$7.50.

▲THERE must be a definite market for this kind of willy-nilly assortment, for there is no end of them. Only the Dukas, of this grouping, is more compellingly available elsewhere (Paray) on all counts. The two Saint-Saens trifles are treated with as sonic thrillers, with slow tempi giving both a

lugubrious aspect that is more appropriate to the *Danse macabre*. I like the Chabrier most of all because Quadri's tendency to be deliberate is in this case the perfect approach. The sound throughout is presence itself. —J.L.

HAYDN, Michael: *Symphony in G; Flute Concerto in D*; unidentified soloist with the Vienna Orchestral Society conducted by F. Charles Adler. Unicorn UNLA-1007, \$4.98.

▲ANYONE who feels that "Papa" Haydn's brother should get more of a break in the history books will not be without this persuasive exhibit. Others will find it diverting, perhaps something more. Robbins Landon's annotations (I assume he is the H. C. R. L. of the signature line) make out an impressive case for both of these works as landmarks in the development of Viennese classical style. Scholars and students will take notice. The less specialized listener, particularly a budget buyer, ought to go by ear. Historical considerations aside, Michael was not the archangel in the family. Clean playing. Bright sound. —J.L.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 94 in G; Symphony No. 101 in D*; Entre RL-6621, \$2.98. **BEE-THOVEN:** *Symphony No. 7 in A, Op. 92*; RL-6622, \$2.98. Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf.

▲THESE discs can boast sonics that mirror the image of an orchestra playing the classical Viennese symphonic literature. The Rochester has spirit and good will, but it is short on the refinement one expects in a first class organization. Leinsdorf's conducting is vigorous and distinguished by good tonal balance, but his performances here cannot compete with others in the LP catalog. In the *Surprise*, for example, the second movement is graceless, the third emerges in plodding fashion, the fourth lacks sparkle. Beecham is the man for this score. In the *Clock*, the suggestion is that, all things considered, you might try Ormandy; though you may think there is more of the Haydn sound in the poorer recordings directed by Ansermet and Toscanini. The Beethoven symphony (Toscanini and Karajan are the choices here) is offered without the rhythmic and phraseological tensions that give the sense of urgency the outer movements require. The second movement is limp. —C.J.L.

HISTORY OF THE DANCE FORM: Erna Heiler (harpichord and piano). Unicorn UNLP-1010, \$4.98.

▲BALLETOMANES beware. Notwithstanding the tricky title, this is not for them. Nor will the average customer be enthralled. I suppose you would have to classify it as a "music appreciation" item, for its purpose is frankly didactic and the professoriat will be sure to embrace it. Dance form in music covers a lot of ground. This survey-recital confines itself to the allemande (nine of them, from Anon. to Bach) and the minuet (ten, from Purcell to Schubert). The illustrations are crisply turned out. The sound is excellent. The annotations are dishwater dull but informative in the accepted academic fashion. —J.L.

KODALY: *Cello Sonata, Op. 4; Duo for Violin and Cello, Op. 7*; Janos Starker (cello), respectively with Otto Herz (piano) and Arnold Eidus (violin). Period SPL-720, \$4.98.

▲BEFORE the first World War it was in chamber music that Kodaly worked with his most auspicious success. This sonata, written in 1910, is one of the masterworks of its limited literature and we are fortunate indeed to have it so ravishingly turned out. The *Duo* of 1914 is markedly more personal in its lyricism, with an *adagio* that fairly throbs in its eloquence. Starker needs no introduction at this late date. He is simply *nonpareil*. His respective collaborators herewith are excellent musicians both. Fine sound. —J.L.

MARAIS: *Suite No. 1 in D major; Suite No. 2 in G major*; Robert Boulay and Marie-Therese Chailley-Guiard (violins) with Laurence Boulay

(harpichord) (harpichord) 50048, \$4.98.

▲IN recent years their attention has been French centuries, da gamba, instruments of the Fourth, the notes, suites the bass. The fast movement, Courante, Roudeau, bines eleg degree. 1 formances

MOZART: "horn"; Wind G \$4.98 or

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J. STRAUSS: mass; Treasures (arr. Sch minster \$4.98.

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(harpsichord)(in No. 1) and Irmgard Lechner (harpsichord)(in No. 2). 12" Oiseau-Lyre OL-50048, \$4.98.

IN recent years recording companies have turned their attention to the works of Marin Marais, a French composer of the late 17th and early 18th Centuries. He composed extensively for the viola da gamba, for he was renowned as a virtuoso on that instrument. The two suites recorded here are from the Fourth Book, published in 1717. According to the notes on the record sleeve, these are the only suites the composer wrote for two viols and figured bass. They are made up of alternating slow and fast movements in typical dance forms: Allemande, Courante, Menuet, Sarabande, Gigue, Gavotte, Rondeau, Musettes. This gracious music combines elegance and refinement to a remarkable degree. The instrumentalists give persuasive performances that have been effectively recorded.

—R.R.

MOZART: *Serenade No. 9 in D, K. 320* ("Post-horn"); Barylli Quartet and Vienna Philharmonic Wind Group. Westminster WN- or SWN-18033, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

THE Sternberg version is sonically inferior. Maag's, on London, is still very much in the running, but purists will have no truck with the "big" sound of the orchestra. The new Westminster is just a bit staid for my taste; otherwise it is perfect. The dimensions are properly Mozartean and so is the flavor. Those listeners who are wondering where to go from the most familiar Mozart could do no better than to address themselves to this infrequently heard, altogether wonderful work. The sound is in keeping with Westminster's high resolve.

—J.L.

RASSE: *Violin Concerto*; Robert Hosset (violin) and L'Orchestre National de Belgique conducted by Rene Defosse. London International (10") W-91063, \$2.98.

THE Belgian composer Francois Rasse (b. 1873) seems to have been suffering from a kind of ambivalent eclecticism when he wrote this concerto, which was apparently around the turn of the century. The style of it is alternately redolent of Delius and Glazunov, which would, and does, make it rather Elgarian in sum. Not unpleasant listening the first time around, prevailingly lush and at all times melodic. But these felicities cloy in short order. Good performance, average sound.

—J.L.

J. STRAUSS: *Paraphrases—Artist's Life; Fledermass; Wine, Women and Song* (arr. Godowsky); *Treasure Waltz* (arr. Dohnanyi); *Pianissimo Polka* (arr. Schulhof); Edith Farnadi (piano). Westminster LP disc SWN or WN18064, \$3.98 or \$4.98.

MISS FARNADI is a brave pianist. Anyone who tackles the Godowsky paraphrases must be either courageous or a Josef Hofmann. These transcendental etudes arranged strictly for purpose of expanding the skill of the pianist and the resources of the piano need Farnadi's musical impulses and understanding but they demand a special technique attained by only a few master players. Since these pieces are not available in such resplendent sound elsewhere, this disc has a market.

—C.J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *Le Sacre du Printemps*; RIAS Symphony Orchestra conducted by Ferenc Fricsay. Decca LP disc DL-9781, \$4.98.

STRAVINSKY'S monumental ballet score represents, among other things, a good yardstick by which one may measure the quality of an orchestra. The RIAS (Radio in the American Section—Berlin), now unhappily disbanded, was a first-rate ensemble that approached real distinction. It plays excep-

tionally well in this somewhat distant and over-mellow recording. Fricsay's pacing is a trifle slow in places, and his rhythm does not bite the way one would like. His reading in general lacks some imagination, and the score does not attain the momentum one expects. Excitement in this music, even of the rough and rowdy Dorati type, is missing. The Monteux and Stravinsky performances are still preferred.

—C.J.L.

VILLA-LOBOS: *Quintette en forme de choros; Bachianas Brasileiras No. 6* for flute and bassoon; *Choros No. 2* for flute and clarinet; **WILDER:** *Quintet for Woodwinds*; the New York Woodwind Quintet. Philharmonia PH-110, \$5.95.

WIND folk should not fear a duplication if they own the Westminster disc that includes the *Quintette*. It was written in 1928 for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, and English horn. In 1953 it was revised, the English horn being supplanted by the more usual French horn. The original version is used by the Westminster group, the subsequent one herewith. The other two Villa-Lobos items are apparently first LP recordings. Extremely listenable trivia. Likewise the Wilder piece, which does not hesitate to embrace the idioms of the dance hall in rather thin disguise. Wilder's music, like that of Villa-Lobos, is unfailingly attractive. They have a great deal in common otherwise that makes this coupling sensible, especially a knack for being willy-nilly eclectic without ever giving offense. Superb ensemble playing. Intimate sound.

—J.L.

WAGNER: *Die Walkure—Wotan's Farewell; Parsifal—Amfortas' Monologue; Die Meistersinger—Fliedermonolog*; **VERDI:** *Simon Boccanegra—M'ardon le tempia; I Vespri Siciliani—O tu Palermo*; **MEYERBEER:** *L'Africaine—Figlia del Re*; Paul Schoeffler (bass-baritone) with Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Felix Prohaska. Vanguard VRS-469, \$4.98.

THIS disc represents a model of how to record a voice. The recording has immediacy and a pleasing sense of spaciousness. Paul Schoeffler is a splendid artist whose very best vocal days have passed. He is still capable, however, of giving pleasure. His Sachs has ever been a warm and noble conception and here it is to the life in the exquisite *Fliedermonolog*. Schoeffler has a reputation as Amfortas, too, and the monolog from *Parsifal* will show you why. Very tender indeed is this singer's delivery of the middle portion of *Wotan's Farewell*, but there is no longer sufficient power or concentration of voice to make the beginning and end telling. Because (with one exception) Schoeffler never attempted the Italian repertory during his tenure at the Metropolitan, it is interesting to hear what he does with Verdi and the Meyerbeer selection. What he does is very musical and very stylish; but his enunciation, as you would expect from a German singer, is not of the best. The *Simon Boccanegra* excerpt is an odd choice; ripped from context it is not a good concert number. *O tu Palermo* is, of course, one of the bass standbys, and Schoeffler sings it with everything required except for an outstandingly smooth *legato*. The Meyerbeer air is the best of the Italian offerings. Here Schoeffler shows a command of the bravura style that is well worth any singer's attention; mastery of that style is all too rare today. The accompaniments of Prohaska are gracious in sound but not firm enough in rhythm.

—C.J.L.

POPS SPOTLIGHT

AVANT-GARDE jazz has been coming in with dotted regularity. Bud Shank and Shorty Rogers, with an assist from Jimmy Rowles, Harry Babasin and Roy Harte, make some nifty music on Pacific LP-1205. On the Contemporary label, you can sample the great trio of Hampton Hawes (C-3505), which for my money is about the swingiest in the business. Then there is Vanguard's *2-Part Inten-*

tions in Jazz in two successive volumes (VRS-8019/20), being a terrific bit of dueting between pianist Ellis Larkins and trumpeter Ruby Braff. RCA Victor has an item entitled *Basses Loaded* (LPM-1107), which features Milt Hinton, Wendell Marshall and Bull Rutler, all playing you know what. If you think that's something, don't miss *The Amazing Jean Thielemans* on Columbia CL-658—"Toots" is not unknown to the serious students of jazz but it is a shame everybody doesn't know him. His instrument is the humble harmonica, and what he can do with it expressively is nobody's business. Ditto, on guitar, Tal Farlow, who is backed up by a quintet on Norgran MG-N-1030 with results that will impress even the unreconstructed Django Reinhardt cultists.

INTERNATIONAL miscellany on tap includes first a couple of Angel jazz items: Humphrey Lyttelton (the English Louis Armstrong) in a New Orleansy program with a slightly polite accent called *Some Like It Hot* (Ang. 60008) and The Cats and Jammer Kids of West Germany (Ang. 60007) in a neat blend of gut-bucket and *Gemuetlichkeit*. Maurice Chevalier, the one and only, appears in albums entitled *Remendez a Paris* (Nos. 1 and 2, London International W 91078/9); what more can you say about this citizen of the world? No matter what he sings, he's terrific. He turns up on another pair of discs styled *French Stars* (same label, also Nos. 1 and 2, W-91056 and '74) along with such as Fernandel, Danielle Darrieux, Suzy Solidor, Marjane and the late lamented Reinhardt. Also from France is the justly famous Garde Republicaine, which has been given a second 12" LP on the strength of its initial success a year ago; the program this time (Angel 35260) makes so bold as to include our own *Stars & Stripes* and *El Capitan*, not to mention an arrangement of the *Star Spangled Banner* by Pierre Duport. While we are in the band department, don't overlook the RCA Victor disc by Paul Lavalle (LPM-1133) that ranges from Rossini's *La Gazza Ladra* Overture to *When the Saints Come Marching In*. Also the Decca concert (DL-8157) by the American Symphonic Band of the Air, although its musical value is absolutely nil—lower than that, in fact, if you take umbrage at the treatment accorded the Berlioz *Beatrice and Benedict* Overture. I think a law should be passed forbidding bands to play anything but band music.

CHRISTMAS is around the corner. Some kind of prize goes to RCA Victor for its early-bird entry. *The Sounds of Christmas* (LPM-1132), with the Three Suns offering an even 20 favorites against a string background. Nice listening, but I infer an ominous portent in the title of this collection. It looks as if we are going to have a loud holiday indeed.

—J.A.S.

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